

Wheeled suitcase with detachable garment holder

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Title of the Invention

Wheeled suitcase with detachable garment holder

Background of the Invention

This invention relates to luggage, specifically a suitcase with means to carry large clothing like suits and dresses without wrinkling. Luggage for transporting clothing typically takes the form of a suitcase or a garment holder. Carrying large garments such as suits and dresses, and avoiding wrinkles, has been an ongoing problem with both these types of luggage. Traditional luggage, commonly referred to as a suitcase cannot hold large garments like suits or dresses without folding them to fit inside, resulting in wrinkles and creases to the garments. Garment holders are the traditional means of traveling with large garments, but these also require folding in half or in thirds to make the garment holder small enough to be carried on board a commercial flight. A further disadvantage to both types of luggage is the need to lift and carry them, which can be inconvenient and uncomfortable.

A recent development has been luggage with wheels and a retractable handle, known commonly as a rollaboard (Plath, Pat. # 4,995,487). This invention allows a user to pull and roll the suitcase instead of having to lift and carry it. This type of suitcase has become extremely popular due to the obvious improvement in comfort and convenience to the user. The most popular types of rolling suitcases are those that are sized to meet the carry-on size limits of airlines, typically 22" x 14" x 9" although these dimension can

vary slightly from airline to airline and country to country. Rollaboard style luggage also suffers from the same deficiency of having to fold large garments to fit them into the luggage.

Manufacturers have tried to combine the convenience of rollaboard type suitcase and the capacity of a garment holder by including an internal garment holder that allows for suits and large garments to be inserted inside the suitcase. These "suiters", as they are known in the luggage industry, eliminate the need to carry two separate pieces of luggage. However, suiter style luggage, as well as traditional garment holders and suitcases - with or without wheels, all suffer from the same deficiency of having to fold large articles of clothing. Furthermore, by putting the garment holder inside the suitcase valuable space is used up.

In U.S. Pat. No. 5,624,026, Chernoff (this applicant) demonstrated the concept of rolling clothing around a cylinder to reduce wrinkles. This concept of rolling, not folding, large garments solves the problem of folding, but a garment holder of this type must still be carried. A fully loaded garment holder of this type can be heavy and uncomfortable to carry.

In conclusion, insofar as I am aware, no wheeled luggage formerly developed allows for large articles of clothing to be carried without the defect of folding the clothing to fit into or onto the luggage.

Summary of the Invention

The primary object of the invention is an improved luggage apparatus that combines the convenience of a wheeled suitcase and the carrying capacity of a large garment holder while reducing the wrinkles and creases associated with both. The invention consists of a wheeled suitcase and a detachable garment holder that wraps around the outside of the suitcase. Wrapping the garment holder around the outside of the suitcase eliminates the need to fold the garment holder and subsequently eliminates wrinkles and creases.

Accordingly several objects and advantages of the invention are to allow large articles of clothing to be carried on the outside of a suitcase, eliminating the need to fold said clothing and resulting in more space inside the suitcase, to enable one to travel with large garments without having to lift or carry a garment holder, and to create a two-part luggage apparatus that can be used together as described herein, or as a separate garment holder and suitcase.

Other objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following descriptions, taken in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein, by way of illustration and example, an embodiment of the present invention is disclosed.

Drawings

The drawings constitute a part of this specification and include exemplary embodiments to the invention, which may be embodied in various forms. It is to be understood that in some instances various aspects of the invention may be shown exaggerated or enlarged to facilitate an understanding of the invention, and some details may be removed from the drawings for clarity.

Figure 1 is a front perspective view of the suitcase portion of the invention.

Figure 2 is a front perspective view of the garment holder portion of the invention.

Figure 3 is a front perspective view of the garment holder portion of the invention opened up completely as would be done to load clothing inside.

Figure 4 is a front perspective view of the invention with the garment holder attached and partially wrapped around the suitcase.

Figure 5 is a front perspective view of the invention with the garment holder completely wrapped around the suitcase.

Figure 6 is a front perspective view of the suitcase portion of the invention showing the Top access access opening.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

Detailed descriptions of the preferred embodiment are provided herein. It is to be understood, however, that the present invention may be embodied in various forms. Therefore, specific details disclosed herein are not to be interpreted as limiting, but rather as a basis for the claims and as a representative basis for teaching one skilled in the art to employ the present invention in virtually any appropriately detailed system, structure or manner.

Referring to the drawings in detail, FIGS. 1 and 2 show the two main components of the invention, comprising a wheeled suitcase 10 having an access opening 11 and a garment holder 20 having an access opening 21. The suitcase 10 comprises a substantially rectangular hollow box with a main access opening 11 a retractable handle 12 on the top portion and wheels 14 along the rear edge of the bottom portion. The wheeled suitcase 10 is loaded with shoes, toiletries, and smaller articles of clothing through access opening 11. Access opening 11 is preferably releasably secured with a zipper 13 extending substantially around 3 sides of the perimeter of access opening 11. Large articles of clothing, including but not limited to suits, dresses, and coats, are loaded into the garment holder 20 through access opening 21. Access opening 21 is preferably releasably secured with a zipper extending substantially around 3 sides of the perimeter of garment holder 20 so that garment holder 20 may be opened to form two opposing halves connected along one edge 23. The four long corner edges 17 of suitcase 10 have foam padding (not shown) beneath the outer fabric of suitcase 10 to

soften and round the corners so when the garment holder 20 is wrapped around the suitcase 10 it gently curves around the suitcase to minimize the chance of creasing the clothing contained inside the garment holder 20.

FIG 3. shows the garment holder 20 completely opened up showing the two opposing halves, the exterior fabric half 24 and the interior fabric half 25. The exterior fabric half 24 of garment holder 20 is made from a ballistic weave polyester or nylon fabric with a waterproof coating on the inside face of the fabric. The interior fabric half 25 of garment holder 20 is made from a lighter weave fabric to save weight and cost. After opening the garment holder 20 and exposing the interior for loading large clothing into the garment holder, clothes are placed onto the inside face of the exterior fabric half of the garment holder 24. After all the clothing is placed onto the exterior fabric half 24 of garment holder 20 the opposing interior fabric half 25 is placed over the clothing and the two fabric halves are joined together by sliding the zipper along access opening 21.

After the suitcase 10 and garment holder 20 are loaded, the user places the garment holder 20 on a large flat surface, a bed or table for example, and places the suitcase 10 on top of the garment holder 20 as shown in FIG 4. The top end 22 of garment holder 20 is aligned with one edge of suitcase 10 and connected to the suitcase 10 with attachment means preferably including 3 clips 30 on the top end 22 of garment holder 20 that are aligned with and connected to complementary clips (not shown for clarity) on the suitcase 10. The attachment means may alternatively include one or more strips of hook and loop style fastener material 40 on the garment holder 20 that are aligned with complementary strips of hook and loop fastener material 40 on the suitcase. For

purposes of clarity, hook and loop fastener strips 40 are only shown on exposed surfaces of the suitcase 10 and garment holder 20. After the suitcase 10 is attached to the garment holder 20, the user rolls the suitcase 10 along the long axis of the garment holder so the garment holder 20 becomes wrapped around the outside of the suitcase 10. When the garment holder 20 is wrapped around the suitcase 10 the interior fabric side 25 of garment holder 20 will be in contact with the exterior surfaces of the suitcase 10 and the exterior fabric side 24 of garment bag 20 will face out and provide the protective surface for the clothes contained inside the garment bag 20.

After the garment holder 20 has been completely wrapped around the suitcase 10 it is secured in place with 3 clips 30 attached to complementary clips on the suitcase or on the outside of the garment holder. For clarity these complementary clips are not shown. The last step in the process is to tighten the straps 50 connected to the clips 30 by pulling on them until the garment holder 20 is held tightly against the suitcase 10. The combination of clips tightened with straps, and hook and loop fastener strips, hold the garment holder 20 securely against the suitcase 10 and prevent slipping and movement of the clothing contained therein. FIG. 5 shows the garment holder completely wrapped around the suitcase with all fasteners removed, for clarity.

While traveling it may be desirable to access the interior of suitcase 10 without removing garment holder 20 to reach main access door 11. FIG. 6 shows the top access door 15 of suitcase 10 opened up to expose the interior 17 of suitcase 10. Access door 15 is releasably securable with a zipper 16 extending around 3 sides of the perimeter of access door 15.

Combining a garment holder and a wheeled suitcase into one apparatus, as described in this specification, has many advantages over existing luggage. All conventional luggage, from carry-on size up to the largest suitcase, requires large clothing to be folded to fit inside. Large luggage may require clothes be folded in half, and the smaller and more popular carry-on size luggage requires large clothing to be folded in thirds. The result is that the folded clothing will develop at least one and typically two creases due to being folded. The invention described herein does away with the need to fold large clothing. By wrapping the garment holder around the padded corners of the suitcase, large clothing gently wraps around the corners of the suitcase, eliminating creasing and reducing the chance for the clothes to become wrinkled. Wrapping large clothing around the outside of the suitcase also frees up space inside the suitcase. This allows the suitcase to be made smaller than a conventional suitcase. The result of reducing the size of the suitcase is that it weighs less and is easier to lift and easier to fit in confined spaces such as the overhead bins on an airplane.

While the invention has been described in connection with a preferred embodiment, it is not intended to limit the scope of the invention to the particular form set forth, but on the contrary, it is intended to cover such alternatives, modifications, and equivalents as may be included within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.